

Chemical Weapons Convention

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, also known as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), opened for signature in Paris Jan. 13, 1993, culminating 25 years of negotiations in the United Nations. Prior to CWC signature, the United States entered into two bilateral agreements with the former Soviet Union concerning chemical weapons.

In 1989, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Soviet Union and the United States regarding a Bilateral Verification Experiment and Data Exchange (referred to as the Wyoming MOU) sought to facilitate the CWC negotiating process through data exchanges and verification experiments, which have been completed.

In 1990, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Bilateral Destruction Agreement (BDA), which prohibits chemical weapons production and calls for each country to destroy most of its chemical weapons capability. By signing the BDA, the United States and the Soviet Union demonstrated their willingness to halt production and begin destruction of chemical weapons without waiting for agreement on the CWC. A verification protocol to the BDA was never completed and the CWC subsequently entered into force.

The CWC prohibits research, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons. States Parties are required to destroy their chemical weapon stockpiles and production facilities located any place under their jurisdiction or control, as well as chemical weapons abandoned on the territory of another State Party. The CWC also prohibits the use of riot control agents as a method of warfare.

Verification

The CWC contains an ambitious verification regime of comprehensive data reporting and detailed on-site inspections. All State Party facilities that produce or consume treaty-limited "scheduled" chemicals above certain levels or thresholds are obligated to report those activities under the CWC.

Any facilities that meet specified production or consumption thresholds found in the CWC must be "declared" by the State Party and become subject to routine inspections. They consist of an initial inspection and periodic follow-ups, called systematic or routine inspections. The purpose of routine inspections is to verify, through on-site inspection, each State Party's declared chemical activities. The Technical Secretariat of the CWC's Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) reviews data declarations and conducts these on-site inspections using multinational inspection teams employed by the organization.

Concerns about compliance with the Convention, including those not resolved during routine inspections, may be addressed through challenge inspections. Conducted by the OPCW, a challenge inspection may be requested by any CWC State Party at any facility of a State Party of the CWC that is believed to be conducting prohibited CW activities. State Parties to the CWC do not have the right to refuse a challenge inspection. No challenge inspections have been initiated to date.

Implementation progress

The U.S. Senate provided its advice and consent to ratification of CWC April 24, 1997, and the treaty entered into force April 29, 1997, 180 days after the 65th signatory (Hungary) deposited its instrument of ratification with the United Nations. 165 states signed the Convention before entry into force. 160 signatories have ratified and 23 states have acceded for a total of 183 CWC member states. The OPCW Technical Secretariat has conducted over 3,100 initial and routine inspections worldwide. These inspections have focused on chemical weapons production, storage and commercial sites and facilities that manufacture small quantities of highly toxic chemicals for permitted medical, pharmaceutical or other peaceful purposes.

The OPCW has completed initial inspections of all U.S. government Department of Defense (DoD) declared facilities. The first CWC initial inspections of a DoD destruction facility occurred at the Tooele Chemical Disposal Facility, Utah, June 1-4, 1997. The first initial inspection of a U.S. storage facility occurred at the Blue Grass Chemical Activity, Kentucky, also in June 1997. Since entry-into-force, the OPCW has conducted 865 visits and inspections at DoD chemical weapons storage, former production, and destruction facilities.

The OPCW currently has a continuous monitoring presence at five facilities: Tooele Chemical Destruction Facility (CDF), UT; Anniston CDF, AL; Pine Bluff CDF, AR; Umatilla CDF, OR; and Newport CDF, IN. Completion of CW destruction activities at the Aberdeen CDF, MD, and the Johnston Atoll Chemical Disposal System ended continuous monitoring requirements in March 2006 and February 2001, respectively.

In May 2000, CWC inspections began at U.S. industry sites. The Department of Commerce (DOC) is the lead agency for industry inspections. The OPCW has conducted 60 initial inspections and 24 reinspections of chemical industry sites.

Agency role

Under the CWC, DTRA has obligations for escorting OPCW inspection teams at DoD facilities in the United States. Before an inspection, the OPCW declares its intent to inspect a U.S. facility to the U.S. Nuclear Risk Reduction Center (NRRC), Washington, D.C. Following notification by the NRRC of an impending DoD CWC inspection, DTRA informs DoD components. DTRA then provides point-of-entry (POE) processing and logistical support for the OPCW team's inspection-related equipment and coordinates support arrangements for OPCW inspectors at the inspected site. The Agency also arranges transportation, escorts the inspectors to the site and serves as on-site escort in partnership with DoD site escorts. For inspections of U.S. chemical industry facilities, DTRA supports DOC by providing technical equipment inspections of the OPCW inspection equipment at the POE. DTRA is also involved in CWC education and preparation programs for U.S. facilities, including assistance

visits, practical exercises and dissemination of information materials through the Defense Treaty Inspection Readiness Program Outreach Program.

Defense Threat Reduction Agency

DTRA safeguards America and its allies from weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high yield explosives) by providing capabilities to reduce, eliminate, and counter the threat, and mitigate its effects. This Department of Defense combat support agency is located at Fort Belvoir, Va., and operates field offices worldwide.

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